اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 29 Al-Ankabut

سُوْرَةُ الْعَنْكَبُوْتِ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

الٓمّٓ ۝١

(29-1) Alif. Lam. Mim.

اَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ اَنْ يُّتْرَكُوْٓا اَنْ يَّقُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُوْنَ ۝٢

(29-2) Do people think that they will be let go merely by saying: “We believe,” and that they will not be tested, [1]

(1) When this thing was said, the conditions prevailing in Makkah were extremely trying. Whoever accepted Islam was made a target of tyranny and humiliation and persecution. If he was a slave or a poor person, he was beaten and subjected to unbearable tortures. If he was a shopkeeper or artisan, he was made to suffer economic hardships, even starvation. If he was a member of an influential family, his own people would tease and harass him in different ways and make life difficult for him. This had created an atmosphere of fear and fright in Makkah, due to which most people were afraid of believing in the Prophet (peace be upon him) although they acknowledged him to be a true Prophet (peace be upon him) in their hearts; and some others who believed would lose heart soon afterwards and would submit and yield to the disbelievers when they confronted dreadful persecutions. Though these trying circumstances could not shake the determination of the strong willed companions, naturally they also were sometimes overwhelmed by an intense feeling of anxiety and distraction. An instance of this is found in the tradition of Khabbab bin Arat (may Allah be pleased with him), which has been related by Bukhari, Abu Daud and Nasai. He says, “During the time when we had become tired of our persecution by the mushriks, one day I saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) sitting in the shade of the wall of the Kabah. I went up to him and

said, O Messenger of Allah, don't you pray for us. Hearing this, his face became red with feeling and emotion, and he said, The believers who have gone before you had been subjected to even greater persecutions. Some one of them was made to sit in a ditch in the earth and was sawed into two pieces from head to foot. Someone's joints were rubbed with iron combs so as to withhold him from the faith. By God, this mission will be accomplished and the time is not far when a person will travel without apprehension from Sana to Hadramaut and there will be none but Allah Whom he will fear."

In order to change this state of agitation into forbearance, Allah tells the believers, "No one can become worthy of Our promises of success in the world and the Hereafter merely by verbal profession of the faith, but every claimant to the faith will have to pass through trials and tribulations so as to furnish proof of the truth of his claim. Our Paradise is not so cheap, neither are Our special favors in the world so low priced that We should bless you with all these as soon as you proclaim verbal faith in Us. The trial is a prerequisite for them. You will have to undergo hardships for Our sake, suffer losses of life and property, face dangers, misfortunes and difficulties; you will be tried both with fear and with greed; you will have to sacrifice everything that you hold dear for Our pleasure, and bear every discomfort in Our way. Then only will it become manifest whether your claim to faith in Us was true or false. This thing has been said at every such place in the Quran where the Muslims have been found placed in hardships and difficulties and obsessed by fear and consternation. In the initial stage of life at Al-Madinah, after the migration, when the Muslims were in great trouble on account of economic hardships, external dangers and internal villainy of the Jews and the hypocrites, Allah said:

"Do you think that you will enter Paradise without undergoing such trials as were experienced by the believers before you? They met with adversity and affliction and were so shaken by trials that the Prophet of the time and his followers cried out, when will Allah's help come? (Then only they were

comforted with the good tidings:) “Yes, Allah’s help is near!” (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 214).

Likewise, when after the battle of Uhud, the Muslims again confronted a period of afflictions, it was said: “Do you think that you will enter Paradise without undergoing any trial, whereas Allah has not yet tried you to see who among you are ready to lay down their lives in His way and who will show fortitude for His sake.” (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayat 142).

Almost the same thing has been said in (Surah Ale- Imran: Ayat 179), (Surah At-Taubah: Ayat 16) and (Surah Muhammad: Ayat 31). Allah in these verses has impressed on the Muslims that trial is the touchstone by which the pure and the impure are judged. The impure is turned aside by Allah and the pure is selected so that Allah may honor them with His favors which the only sincere believers deserve.

وَ لَقَ فَتَنَّا الَّذِيۡ نَ مِنۡ قَ بۡ لِ هِمۡ فَلَيَعۡلَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيۡ نَ صَدَقُوۡ ا وَ لَيَعۡلَمَنَّ الۡكٰذِبِيۡ نَ ۳

(29-3) for We indeed tested those who went before them? (2) Allah will most certainly ascertain (3) those who spoke the truth and those who lied.

(2) That is, this is not a new thing which you alone may be experiencing. The same has also been happening before you. Whoever made a claim to the faith, he was made to pass through trials and tribulations. And when the others were not given anything without the trial, you are in no way any special people that you should be favored and rewarded merely on verbal profession of the faith.

(3) Literally, “It is necessary that Allah should find out.” A question may be asked: “When Allah already knows the truth of the truthful and the untruth of the liar, why should He put the people to the test for the sake of these” The answer is: Until a person has manifested his potential and capability to do a thing in practical terms, justice requires that he neither deserves any rewards nor any punishment. One man, for example, is capable of

being trustworthy and another man of being un-trustworthy. Unless both are tried and one manifests trustworthiness and the other the lack of it practically, it will not be justice on the part of Allah that He should reward one for trustworthiness and punish the other for the lack of it only on the basis of His knowledge of the unseen. Therefore the knowledge Allah already possesses about the capabilities of the people and about their conduct in the future is not enough to satisfy the requirements of justice until the people have manifested their potentialities in practical ways. Justice with Allah is not based on the knowledge that a person possesses a tendency to steal and will commit a theft, but on the knowledge that he has actually committed a theft. Likewise, Allah does not bestow favors and rewards on the basis of the knowledge that a person has the potential and capability to become a great believer and fighter in His way, but on the basis of the knowledge that the person concerned has practically proved by deed and action that he is a sincere believer and a brave fighter in His way. That is why we have translated the words of the verse as: “Allah will surely make evident.”

اَم حَسِبَ الَّذِ مِنَ يَعۡمَلُ عَنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ لَو يَّ نيِفُسنَاۚ سَآءَ مَا يَ وكُمُ نَحو ۴

(29-4) Do the evil-doers (4) suppose that they will get the better of Us?5 How evil is their judgement!

(4) This may refer to all those people who disobey Allah’s commands but here particularly it implies those wicked chiefs of the Quraish, who were in the forefront in their antagonism to Islam and persecution of the converts to Islam, e.g. Walid bin Mughirah, Abu Jahl, Utbah, Shaibah, Uqbah bin Abi Muait, Hanzalah bin Wail, etc. Here the context itself requires that after exhorting the Muslims to patience and fortitude against the trials and tests, those people also should be chided and scolded, who were persecuting the believers.

(5) It may also mean: “that they will escape Our grasp.” The words yasbiquna in the original may have two meanings: (1) “Whatever we will (i.e. the success of the mission of Our Messenger) should meet with failure, and whatever they wish (i.e.

to frustrate the mission of Our Messenger) should be accomplished;" and (2) "We may want to seize them for their excesses and they should be able to escape and get out of Our reach."

مَن كَانَ يَرۡجُوا لِقَآءَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اَجَلَ اللّٰهِ لَاٰتٍ ؕ وَ هُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡعَلِيۡمُ ۝٥

(29-5) Let him who looks forward to meeting Allah know that Allah's appointed term will surely come to pass. (6) He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (7)

(6) That is, the case of the one who does not believe in the life Hereafter and thinks he is answerable to none for his deeds and there is no accountability whatever, is different. He may remain heedless and act as he likes, for he will himself see the consequences when they appear against his expectations. But those who expect that they have to meet their Lord one day and will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds, should not have the misunderstanding that the time of death is yet far off. They should rather think that it is near at hand and the respite for action is about to come to an end. Therefore, whatever they can do for their well being in the Hereafter, they should do. They should not delay self reform on account of the baseless belief that they have yet to live a long life.

(7) That is, that God before Whom they will appear to render their accounts is not uninformed. He hears everything and knows every thing, and nothing about them is hidden from Him.

وَ مَن جَاهَدَ فَاِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفۡسِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَغَنِىٌّ عَنِ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ۝٦

(29-6) Whosoever strives(in the cause of Allah) does so to his own good. (8) Surely Allah stands in no need of anyone in the whole Universe. (9)

(8) The word mujahadah means to struggle and exert one's utmost against an opponent, and when the particular opponent force is not pointed out, the word implies an allout, many sided

struggle. The struggle that a believer has to make in the world is of this very nature. He has to fight against Satan, who frightens him every moment of the possible losses that they have to incur for the sake of good and allures him with the benefits and pleasures of the evil. He has to fight his own self also, which exerts to make him the slave of its lusts. He has also to fight all those men, from home to the world outside, whose ideology, trends, morality, customs, way of life and social and economic principles may be in conflict with his faith. And he has to fight that state too, which enforces its laws independent of obedience to Allah, and employs its forces to promote evil instead of the good. This struggle is not of a day or two, but of a lifetime, of every moment of the day and night. And it is not a struggle in one field only but on every front of life. It is about this that Hasan Basri has said: “Man exerts in the way of Allah, even though he may not strike one sword at any time.”

(9) That is, Allah is not asking you to exert your utmost because he stands in need of any help from you to establish His Godhead and keep it established and sustained. But He instructs you to enter this conflict because this opens the way to your own progress. Through this way only, you can get rid of the evil and follow the way of truth. Through this way alone you can develop the ability and power to rise as the standard bearers of goodness in the world and become worthy of Allah’s Paradise in the Hereafter. By waging this war you will not do any favor to Allah but will only be helping your own selves.

وَ الَّذِ ۡیۡ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَنُکَفِّرَنَّ عَ ۡنُہ سَیِّاٰتِہ وَ لَنَ جۡزِیَنَّہ
اَ حۡسَنَ الَّذِ کَانُوۡ ا یَ ۡمَلُوۡنَ ۷

(29-7) Those who believe and do good deeds, We shall cleanse them of their evil deeds and reward them according to the best of their deeds. (10)

(10) Iman means to believe in and accept sincerely all those things to which the Messenger of Allah and this Book invite; and As-salihat are those righteous deeds which are performed in accordance with the guidance of Allah and His Messenger. The

righteous deed of the heart and mind is that man's thinking and his ideas and his intentions should be right and pure. The righteous deed of the tongue is that man should refrain from talking evil things, and whatever he says should be just and right and true. And the righteous deed of the limbs is that man''s entire life should be spent in Allah's worship and in obedience to His commands and law. Two results of the belief and righteous deeds have been mentioned: (1) That man's evils will be wiped off; and (2) that he will be rewarded for the best of his deeds better than what he will actually deserve.

Wiping off of evils means several things: (1) All kinds of sins that man might have committed before his affirmation of the faith will be pardoned as soon as he believes; (2) the errors that man might have committed after the affirmation of the faith due to human weakness, but not because of a rebellious attitude, will be overlooked in view of his good deeds; (3) man's self reform will automatically take place when he adopts a life of belief and righteousness, and most of his weaknesses will be removed from him.

The sentence, "We shall reward them for the best of what they used to do" has two meanings: (1) Man will be given his rewards on the basis of the best of his deeds; and (2) he will be rewarded better and more handsomely than what he will actually deserve for his deeds. This thing has been stated at other places also in the Quran. For instance, in (Surah Al-Anam: Ayat 160), it has been said: "He who will bring a good deed before Allah, will receive a tenfold reward for it", and in (Surah Al-Qasas: Ayat 4): "Whoever brings a good deed, shall have a better reward than that", and in (Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 40): "Indeed Allah does not wrong anyone even by a jot: if one does a good deed, He increases it manifold."

وَ وَصَّ يَنَا ا لِۡاِ نۡسَانَ بِوَالِدَ يۡهِ حُسۡنًا ؕ وَ اِ نۡ جَا هَدٰكَ لِتُشۡرِكَ بِيۡ مَا لَـ يۡسَ لَكَ
بِهٖ عِلۡمٌ فَلَا تُطِعۡهُمَا ؕ اِلَيَّ مَرۡجِعُكُمۡ فَاُنَبِّئُكُمۡ بِمَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ۸

(29-8) We have enjoined upon man kindness to his parents, but if they exert pressure on you to associate with Me in My Divinity any that you do not know (to be My associate), do not

obey them. (11) To Me is your return, and I shall let you know all that you have done. (12)

(11) According to Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Abu Daud and Nasai, this verse was sent down in respect of Saad bin Abi Waqqas. He was 18 or 19 years old when he embraced Islam. When his mother, Hamnah, daughter of Sufyan bin Umayyah (neice of Abu Sufyan), came to know that her son had become a Muslim, she said, “I will neither eat nor drink nor sit in shade unless you disown Muhammad. The rights of the mother are superior even according to Allah’s command. Therefore if you disobey me, you will be disobeying Allah too.” Saad was perplexed and came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and told this entire story. At that, this verse was revealed. Possibly other young men who embraced Islam in the initial stage at Makkah were also confronted with similar situations. Therefore, the same theme has been repeated forcefully in (Surah Luqman: Ayat 15) also.

What the verse means to impress is this: The rights of the parents, among the creation of Allah, are to be held as the supreme, but even if the parents force a person to adopt shirk, they should not be obeyed. The words, “And if they strive with you to make you join with Me” imply that a lesser pressure, or a pressure by either of them, deserves to be set aside much more promptly. The next sentence, “Of which you have no knowledge (as such)” is also noteworthy. This gives a sound reason for not obeying the parents in this regard. The parents certainly have the right that the children should serve them, respect them, and obey them in lawful things. But they do not have the right that one should obey them blindly against one’s knowledge of the reality. Therefore, there is no reason why a person should go on following his parents’ religion just because it is their religion. If the children come to know that their parents are following a false religion, they should give it up and adopt the right religion, and should not follow the wrong way whose falsehood has become clear to them even if the parents use every kind of pressure for it. When this is so in the case of even the parents, it should be so with every other person, too. No one deserves to be followed and obeyed

unless one is sure that the person being followed is on the right path.

(12) That is, the relationships of this world and their obligations are confined to the world. At last, the parents as well as the children have to return to their Creator, and before Him everybody will be held answerable only on the basis of his personal responsibility. If the parents have misled the children, they will be called to account. If the children have accepted deviation for the sake of the parents, they will be punished. And if the children adopted the right way, and showed no slackness in rendering the parents' lawful rights either, but the parents ill treated them only for the reason that they did not join them in their deviation, they will not be able to escape Allah's punishment.

وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ عَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ لَنُدۡخِلَنَّهُمۡ فِی الصّٰلِحِیۡنَ ۝۹

(29-9) As for those who believed and acted righteously, We shall certainly admit them among the righteous.

وَ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَنۡ یَّقُوۡلُ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ فَاِذَاۤ اُوۡذِیَ فِی اللّٰهِ جَعَلَ فِتۡنَةَ النَّاسِ
كَعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ لَئِنۡ جَآءَ نَصۡرٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكَ لَیَقُوۡلُنَّ اِنَّا كُنَّا مَعَكُمۡ ؕ اَوَ لَیۡسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَعۡلَمَ بِمَا
فِیۡ صُدُوۡرِ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ۝۱۰

(29-10) Among people there are some who say: (13) "We believe in Allah." But when such a person is made to endure suffering in Allah's cause, he reckons the persecution he suffers at the hands of people as though it is a chastisement from Allah. (14) But if victory comes from your Lord, the same person will say "We were with you." (15) Does Allah not know whatever is in the hearts of the people of the world?

(13) Though the speaker is a single person, he uses the plural pronoun and says, "We have believed," Imam Razi has pointed out a subtle point in it. He says that the hypocrite always tries to be counted among the believers and mentions his faith as though he is also a true believer like others. His case is like that of a cowardly soldier who accompanies an army to the battlefield

where the soldiers have fought well and put the enemy to rout. This cowardly person might have made no contribution at all, but when he returns home, he will say, “We put up a good fight and routed the enemy,” as if he was one of the heroes of the battlefield.

(14) That is, just as one should desist from disbelief and sin due to fear of Allah’s punishment, so did this man desist from faith and goodness due to fear of persecution by the people. When after belief he was confronted with threats and imprisonment and harsh treatment from the disbelievers, he thought that Allah’s punishment in Hell which he will have to suffer after death in consequence of his disbelief, will be no severer than that. Therefore, he decided that he would suffer the torment of the next world at its own time, but should give up faith and rejoin the disbelievers so that he might save himself from the torment of this world and pass an easy life.

(15) That is, today he has joined the disbelievers in order to save his skin, and has abandoned the believers for he is not prepared even to suffer a thorn prick in the cause of promoting Allah’s religion. But when Allah will favor with success and victory those who are struggling in His cause with their lives and wealth, this person will come forward to have his share of the fruits of the victory and will tell the Muslims, “Our hearts were with you, we used to pray for your success, we thought very highly of your devotion to duty and your sacrifices.”

Here, one should understand that in case of an unbearable persecution and loss and extreme fear, one is permitted to disown Islam and save one’s life, provided that he remains firm in his faith with a sincere heart. But there is a big difference between the sincere Muslim who disowns Islam under compulsion in order to save his life and the opportunist who ideologically believes in Islam as a true religion but joins the disbelievers when he sees the dangers and risks. Apparently, they do not seem to be much different from each other, but the thing which sets them apart is this: The sincere Muslim who utters disbelief under compulsion not only remains attached to Islam

ideologically, but practically, his sympathies remain with Islam and the Muslims; he feels happy over their successes and unhappy at their defeat. Even under compulsion he tries to avail himself of every opportunity to cooperate with the Muslims, and remains on the lookout for a chance to join his brethren in faith as soon as the grip of the enemies loosens a little. Contrary to this, when the opportunist finds that the way of the faith is difficult to follow and calculates carefully that the disadvantages of siding with Islam outweigh the advantages of rejoining the disbelievers, he turns away from Islam and the Muslims for the sake of personal safety and worldly gains, establishes friendship with the disbelievers and is prepared to carry out for his own interests any service for them, which may be utterly opposed to the faith and harmful to the Muslims. But at the same time, he does not close his eyes to the possibility that Islam also might prosper some time in the future. Therefore, whenever he gets an opportunity to talk to the Muslims, he acknowledges their ideology and admits his faith and pays homage to their sacrifices most generously, so that his verbal admissions might be helpful as and when required. In(Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 141), this same bargaining mentality of the hypocrites has been described, thus: The hypocrites are watching you closely to see (how the wind blows). If victory comes to you from Allah, they will say to you, “Were we not with you?” And if the disbelievers gain the upper hand, they will say to them, “Were we not strong enough to fight against you? Yet we defended you from the Muslims.”

وَ لَيَعۡلَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ لَيَعۡلَمَنَّ الۡمُنٰفِقِيۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾

(29-11) Allah will surely ascertain who are the believers and who are the hypocrites. (16)

(16) That is, Allah provides occasions for the trial again and again so that the faith of the believers and the hypocrisy of the hypocrites become manifest, and whatever is hidden in the hearts becomes exposed. The same thing has been said in (Surah Aal-Imran: Ayat 179): “Allah will not leave the believers in the state in which you happen to be at present: He will surely separate the pure from the impure people.”

وَ قَالَ الَّذِ نَ كَفَوُا لِلَّذِ نَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّبِعُوا سَبِ لَنَا وَلۡ نَحۡ لِ خَطٰيٰكُمۡ وَ مَاۡ م بِحٰمِلِ نَ مِ خَطٰيٰهُم مِّ شَ ءٍۡ اِنَّۡ لَكٰذِبُونَ١٢

(29-12) The unbelievers say to the believers: “Follow our way and we will carry the burden of your sins.” (17) (They say so even though) they are not going to carry any part of their sins. (18) Surely they are lying.

(17) What they meant to say was: “In the first place, the talk about life hereafter and Resurrection and accountability is all meaningless. But supposing there is another life in which the people will be called to account for their deeds, we take the responsibility that we shall take the punishment, etc. on our own selves. You should, therefore, listen to us and give up this new faith and return to your ancestral religion. According to the traditions several chiefs of the Quraish used to counsel thus the people who embraced Islam in the beginning. So, when Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) accepted Islam, Abu Sufyan and Harab bin Umayyah bin Khalaf met him and said these very things.

(18) That is, it is not at all possible that a person should take the responsibility for another before Allah, and thus enable the actual sinner to escape the punishment of his sin, for every person will be responsible for his own deeds there. No bearer of a burden shall bear the burden of another (Sura An-Najm: Ayat 38). But if at all it be so, none will have the nerve, while the blazing Hell is ready to punish the disbelievers, to say to Allah, only for the sake of honoring his pledge in the world, “Lord, forgive this person and send him to Paradise, he had turned apostate on my counseling: I offer myself to suffer the punishment for my own disbelief as well as for his in Hell.”

وَ لَيَ حِلُنَّ اَ ثۡقَالَهُم وَ اَ ثۡقَالًا مَّعَ اَ ثۡقَالِهِم وَ لَيُسۡـَٔلُنَّ يَ وۡمَ لِقِيٰمَةِ عَمَّا
كَانُ وۡا يَ فۡتَرُونَ ١٣

(29-13) They will certainly carry their own burdens and other burdens besides their own. (19) They will assuredly be called to account on the Day of Resurrection concerning the fabrications which they contrived. (20)

(19) That is, though they will not bear the burdens of others, they will neither escape bearing a double burden: one burden of their own selves going astray, and the burden of leading the others astray. This can be understood by an example. A person commits theft and also asks another person to join him. Now if the other person also commits theft, no judge will let him off only because he had committed the offense on someone else's prompting. He will in any case be punished for the theft and it will not be fair according to any law of justice to let him off and punish instead of him the first thief who had prompted him to commit the theft. However, the first thief will suffer punishment for two offenses: the offense of committing theft himself and the offense of turning another person into a thief along with himself. This principle has been stated at another place in the Quran thus "So that they should bear the full brunt of their own burdens on the Day of Resurrection together with some of the burdens of those whom they are leading astray in their ignorance." (Surah An-Nahl: Ayat 25) The same principle has been elucidated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this Hadith: "Whoever invited others to the right path will be granted a reward equal to the rewards of all those who listened to him and adopted the right path, without diminishing their rewards in any way. And whoever invited others to deviation will earn a sin equal to the sins of all those who followed him, without diminishing their sins in any way."

(20) "They used to invent" implies all those untruths which were hidden in this saying of the disbelievers: "Follow our way and we will bear the burden of your sins." In fact, they said this on the basis of two presumptions: (1) The creed of shirk they are following is based on the truth and the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) doctrine of Tauhid is false; therefore, there is

nothing wrong if it is rejected; and (2) there is going to be no Resurrection, and the doctrine of the Hereafter which deters a Muslim from unbelief is baseless. With these presumptions they would counsel a Muslim, saying, “Well, if you think that disbelief is really a sin, and there is going to be Resurrection when you will be called to account for this sin, then we are ready to take this sin of yours on our selves. You leave it to us and give up the religion of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and return to your ancestral religion.” In this two other false things were also included: (a) Their belief that a person who commits an offense on someone else’s prompting can be exempted from its responsibility, and the whole responsibility can be assumed by the one who had prompted the commission of the offense; and (b) their false promise that on the Day of Resurrection they will certainly assume the responsibility for those who might have turned apostates on their counseling. For, when Resurrection will actually be established, and they will see Hell against their expectations, they will never be prepared to receive the punishment of their own disbelief as well as bear the whole burden of the sins of those others whom they had deceived and misled in the world.

وَ لَقَدۡ اَ ۡسَلۡنَا نُوۡحًا اِلٰی قَوۡمِہٖ فَلَبِثَ فِیۡہِمۡ اَلۡفَ سَنَۃٍ اِلَّا خَمۡسِیۡنَ
عَامًا ؕ فَاَخَذَہُمُ الطُّوۡفَانُ وَ ہُمۡ ظٰلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾

(29-14) We did indeed send Noah to his people (21) and he lived among them a thousand years save fifty. (22) Eventually the Flood overtook them while they were engaged in wrongdoing. (23)

(21) For comparison, see (Surah Ale-Imran: Ayats 33-34), (Surah An-Nisa: Ayat 163), (Surah Al-Anam: Ayat 84), (Surah Al-Araf: Ayats 59-64), (Surah Yuuns: Ayats 71-73), (Surah Hud: Ayats 25-48), (Surah Al-Anbiyaa: Ayats 76-77), (Surah Al-Muminun: Ayats 23-30), (Surah Al-Furqan: Ayat 37), (Surah Ash-Shuara: Ayats 105-123), (Surah As-Saffat: Ayats 75-82), (Surah Al-Qamar: Ayats 9-15), (Surah Al- Haqqah: Ayats 11-12), Surah Nuh: Entire Surah. One should keep the initial verses of this Surah in view in order to understand the relevancy of these stories in this context. There, on the one hand, it has been said to the believers, “We have put to the test all those believers who have passed before you”, and, on the other, the wicked disbelievers have been warned to the effect: “You should not have the

misunderstanding that you will outstrip Us and escape Our grasp.” It is to impress these two things that these historical events are being related here.

(22) This does not mean that the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) lived for 950 years, but it means that after his appointment to prophethood till the coming of the flood, he went on making efforts for 950 years for the reformation of his wicked people, and he did not lose heart even though he suffered persecutions for such a long time. The same is the aim of the discourse here. The believers are being told: “You have been suffering persecutions and experiencing stubbornness of your wicked opponents hardly for six years or so. Just imagine the patience and resolution and firmness of Our servant who braved such afflictions and hardships continuously for nine and a half centuries.”

The Quran and the Bible differ about the age of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him). The Bible says that he lived for 950 years. He was 600 years old when the flood came, and lived for another 350 years after the flood. But according to the Quran, he must have lived for at least a thousand years, because 950 years is the time that he spent in preaching his mission after his appointment to prophethood till the coming of the flood. Evidently, he must have been appointed to prophethood after he had attained his maturity, and must have lived some life after the flood also.

For some people such a long life is inconceivable. But in this world of God strange happenings are not rare. Wherever one may look one will see extraordinary manifestations of His power. The occurrence of certain events and things in a usual form and manner is no proof that the event or thing cannot happen in an unusual and extraordinary way. To break these assumptions there exists a long list of unusual events and things that have taken place in every kind of creation in every part of the universe. In particular, the person who has a clear concept of God’s being All-Powerful, cannot be involved in the misunderstanding that it is not possible for God, Who is the Creator of life and death, to grant

a life of a thousand years or so to any man. The fact is that man of his own will and wish cannot live even for a moment, but if Allah wills, He can make him live for as long as He pleases.

(23) That is, the flood came when they still persisted in their wickedness. Had they desisted from it before the coming of the flood, Allah would not have sent this torment on them.

فَاَ جَیَّنٰهُ وَ اَ صۡحٰبَ السَّفِیۡنَةِ وَجَعَلۡنٰهَاۤ اٰیَةً لِّلۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ﴿۲۹﴾۱۵

(29-15) Then We rescued Noah together with the people in the Ark (24) and made it (that is, the Ark) a lesson for all people. (25)

(24) That is, the people who had believed in Noah (peace be upon him), and who had been permitted by Allah to board the Ark. This has been elucidated in Surah Hud: Ayat 40, thus: “Until when Our command came to pass and at- Tannur began to boil up, We said, (O Noah), take into Ark a pair from every species, and embark your own people save those who have already been specifically marked, and also those who have believed; and those who had believed with Noah (peace be upon him) were only a few.”

(25) It can also mean this: “We made this dreadful punishment or this great event a sign of warning for the later generations.” But from the way this has been mentioned here and in Surah Al-Qamar, it appears that the object of warning was the Ark itself, which remained on the top of the mountain for centuries and continued to remind the later generations that a flood of such magnitude had once come in that land because of which the Ark had risen up to rest on the mountain. In (Surah Al-Qamar: Ayats 13- 15), it has been said: “And We bore Noah upon a thing (Ark) made of planks and nails, which floated under Our care. This was a vengeance for the sake of him who had been slighted. And We left that Ark as a sign. Then, is there any who would take admonition?”

In his commentary on this verse of Surah Al-Qamar, Ibn Jarir says on the authority of Qatadah that during the period of the companions when the Muslims went to the land of al-Jazirah, they saw the Ark on mount Judi (according to another tradition, near the habitation of Baqirwa). In the modern times also news appear from time to time in the media that expeditions are being sent to search out the boat, because something resembling a boat has been sighted many time from airplanes during flights over Mount Ararat. See (E.N. 47 of Surah Al-Araf) and (E.N. 46 of Surah Hud).

وَإِبۡرَٰهِيمَ إِذۡ قَالَ لِقَوۡمِهِ ٱعۡبُدُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱتَّقُوهُۖ ذَٰلِكُمۡ خَيۡرٞ لَّكُمۡ إِن كُنتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُونَ ١٦

(29-16) We sent Abraham (26) and he said to his people: "Serve Allah and fear Him. (27) This is better for you if you only knew.

(26) For comparison, see (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayats 122-141, 258-260); (Surah Ale-Imran: Ayats 64-71); (Surah Al-Anam: Ayats 71-82); (Surah Hud: Ayats 69-83); (Surah Ibrahim: Ayats 35-41); (Surah Al-Hijr: Ayats 45-60); (Surah Maryam: Ayats 41-50); (Surah Al-Anbiyah: Ayats 51-75); (Surah Ash- Shuara: Ayats 69-104); (Surah As-Safftat: Ayats 75-113); (Surah Az-Zukhruf: Ayats 26-35); (Surah Az-Zariyat: Ayats 24-46).

(27) That is, "Fear disobeying Him and associating others with Him."

إِنَّمَا تَعۡبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ أَوۡثَٰنٗا وَتَخۡلُقُونَ إِفۡكًاۚ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ تَعۡبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ لَا يَمۡلِكُونَ لَكُمۡ رِزۡقٗا فَٱبۡتَغُواْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرِّزۡقَ وَٱعۡبُدُوهُ وَٱشۡكُرُواْ لَهُۥٓۖ إِلَيۡهِ تُرۡجَعُونَ ١٧

(29-17) Those that you worship instead of Allah are merely idols, and you are simply inventing lies (about them). (28) Indeed those whom you worship beside Allah have no power to provide you with any sustenance. So seek your sustenance from Allah and serve only Him and give thanks to Him alone. It is to Him that you will be sent back. (29)

(28) That is, "You are not forging idols but a lie. These idols are in themselves a lie. Then your beliefs that they are gods and

goddesses, or they are incarnation of God, or His offspring, or His favorites, or intercessors with Him, or that someone of them is bestower of health, or giver of children or jobs, are all lies, which you have invented from your own whims and conjecture. The fact is that they are in no way more than idols, lifeless, powerless and impotent."

(29) In these few sentences the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) has put together all rational arguments against idol worship. There must necessarily be some reason for making somebody or something a deity. One such reason can be that somebody should be entitled to being a deity due to some personal excellence. Another, that he should be the creator of man, and man should be indebted to him for his existence. Third, that he should be responsible for man's sustenance, his food and other means of life. Fourth, that man's future should be linked up with his support and bounty, and man may be afraid that annoying him would mean bringing about his own ruin. The Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) said that none of these four things favored idol worship, but they all favored and demanded pure God worship. Saying that "You worship other than Allah only idols", he demolished the first argument, for a mere idol could have no excellence to entitle it to be a deity. Then, by saying that "And you invent a falsehood", he refuted the second argument, and "They have no power to give you provision" destroyed the third reason. Lastly, he said, "To Him you will be brought back" and not to the idols; therefore, it was not in their power to make or mar your destiny, but in the power of God alone. Thus, after a complete refutation of shirk, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) made it clear to them that all the reasons for which man could regard somebody as a deity only applied to Allah, Who alone should be worshiped without associating anyone else with him.

وَ اِ ن تُكَذِّبُوۡا فَقَدۡ كَذَّبَ اُمَمٌ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِكُمۡ ؕ وَ مَا عَلَى الرَّسُوۡلِ اِلَّا الۡبَلٰغُ الۡمُبِيۡنُ ﴿۱۸﴾

(29-18) And if you give the lie (to the Messenger), then many nations before you also gave the lie (30) (to their

Messengers). The Messenger is charged with no other duty than to deliver the Message in clear terms."

(30) That is, if you reject my invitation to Tauhid and deny my message that you have to return to your Lord and render an account of your deeds, it will not be a new thing. In the history of mankind many Prophets like Noah, Hud, Salih (peace be upon them) have also brought the same teachings, and their peoples denied them likewise. Now you may judge for yourselves as to whether they harmed the Prophets or only themselves.

اَوَ لَ مۡ يَرَوۡا كَيۡفَ يُبۡدِئُ اللّٰهُ الۡخَلۡقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيۡدُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرٌ ۝١٩

(29-19) Have (31) they never observed how Allah creates for the first time and then repeats it? Indeed (to repeat the creation of a thing) is even easier for Allah (32) (than creating it for the first time).

(31) From here to the end of (Ayat 23)is a parenthesis, which has been interposed in the story of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and addressed to the disbelievers of Makkah. The relevance of this interposition in the story, which is being related for the admonition of the disbelievers, is that they were basically involved in two kinds of deviation: shirk and idol worship, and the denial of the Hereafter. The first of these has been refuted in the Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) speech as related above. Now the second is being refuted in these few sentences by Allah Himself.

(32) That is, On the one hand, countless new things come into existence from non existence, and on the other, similar new members continue coming into existence to take the place of the dying members of every species. The polytheists acknowledged that that was all due to Allah's power of creation and invention. They never denied Allah being a Creator, just as the polytheists of today do not do. Therefore, the argument has been based upon what they themselves acknowledged as a reality, as if to say, "How do you think that God, Who, according to your own belief, brings things into existence from non existence, and does not

create things just once, but goes on bringing into existence similar things in place of the dying things repeatedly in front of your very eyes, will not be able to raise you back to life after death?" see (E.N. 80 of Surah An-Naml).

قُلۡ سِیۡرُوۡا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ فَانۡظُرُوۡا کَیۡفَ بَدَاَ الۡخَلۡقَ ثُمَّ اللّٰہُ یُنۡشِئُ النَّشۡاَۃَ الۡاٰخِرَۃَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ قَدِیۡرٌ ۲۰

(29-20) Say: "Go about the earth and see how He created for the first time, and then Allah will recreate life." Surely, Allah has power over everything. (33)

(33) That is, "When you yourselves are witnessing things being created in the first instance by God's competence and skill, you should understand it well that re-creation shall also take place by the same competence and skill. Such a thing is not beyond His power nor can it be."

یُعَذِّبُ مَنۡ یَّشَآءُ وَ یَرۡحَمُ مَنۡ یَّشَآءُ ۚ وَ اِلَیۡہِ تُقۡلَبُوۡنَ ۲۱

(29-21) He chastises whom He will and forgives whom He will. To Him all of you will be sent back.

وَ مَاۤ اَنۡتُمۡ بِمُعۡجِزِیۡنَ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ لَا فِی السَّمَآءِ ۫ وَ مَا لَکُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰہِ مِنۡ وَّلِیٍّ وَّ لَا نَصِیۡرٍ ۲۲

(29-22) You cannot overpower Allah, neither on the earth nor in the heaven. (34) None can protect you from Allah (35) nor come to your aid against Him.

(34) That is, you cannot escape Allah's grasp wherever you may flee. Whether you descend into the depths of the earth or climb into the heights of the sky, you will be apprehended in any case and brought before your Lord. The same thing has been said in Surah Ar-Rahman as a challenge to the jinns and mankind: "O company of jinns and men! If you have the power to escape across the bounds of the earth and heavens, then do escape! You shall not escape, for it requires a great power," (Ayat 33).

(35) That is, neither you yourselves have the power that you should escape Allah’s grasp, nor are any of your guardians or patrons or supporters so powerful that they should give you refuge against Allah and save you from His punishment. None in the entire universe can dare rise as a supporter of those who have committed shirk and disbelief, or who have refused to submit before divine commands, or who have dared disobey Allah impudently, and raised storms of wickedness and mischief on His earth. And withhold enforcement of the divine decree of torment, or have the nerve to say in God’s court: They are my followers, therefore, whatever they might have done should be forgiven.

وَ الَّذِ یۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰیٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَ لِقَآئِهٖۤ اُولٰٓئِكَ یَئِسُوۡا مِنۡ رَّحۡمَتِیۡ وَ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ اَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۲۳﴾

(29-23) Those who disbelieved in Allah's signs and in meeting Him, it is they who have despaired of My Mercy; (36) it is they for whom a painful chastisement lies ahead.

(36) That is, they have no share in My mercy, and they should entertain no hope whatsoever of getting any share of My mercy. When they denied the revelations of Allah, they themselves gave up their right to benefit by the promises Allah has made to the believers. Then, when they have denied the Hereafter and do not at all believe that one day they will have to stand before their God, it only means that they cherish no hope at all of Allah’s pardon and forgiveness. After this when they will open their eyes in the- Hereafter, against their expectations, and will also see the truth of those signs of Allah, which they had denied, there is no reason why they should expect to receive any share from Allah’s mercy.

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوۡمِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ قَالُوا اقۡتُلُوۡهُ اَوۡ حَرِّقُوۡهُ فَاَنۡجٰىهُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ النَّارِ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّقَوۡمٍ یُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

(29-24) The people (37) (of Abraham) had no other answer than to say: “Kill him or burn him.” (38) But Allah delivered him from the fire. (39) There are many Signs in this for those who believe. (40)

(37) From here the discourse again turns to the story of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him).

(38) That is, they had no answer to the Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) rational arguments. The only answer they gave was: "Cut off the tongue that talks the truth and let not the person live who points out our error and tells us to give it up." The words, "Kill him or burn him", indicate that the whole crowd was unanimous that the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) should be put to death. However, they differed about the method. Some said that he should be killed, and others said that he should be burnt alive, so that no one in future should dare say the sort of the thing he said.

(39) This sentence by itself shows that they had at last decided to burn the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and he was cast into the fire. Here it has only been said that Allah saved him from the fire; but in Surah Al-Anbiyaa it has been elucidated that Allah commanded: "O fire! Be cool and become safe for Abraham!" (Ayat 69). Evidently, if he was not at all cast into the fire, the command to the fire to become cool and safe would be meaningless. This proves that properties of all things are dependent on Allah's command and whenever He pleases He can change the property of anything He likes. Normally fire burns and every combustible thing catches fire. But this property of the fire is not of its own acquisition but given by God. And this property has in no way tied up God that He may give no command against it. He is the Master of this fire. He can command it at any time to give up the property of burning. At any time, He can turn a furnace into a bed of roses. But events contrary to the course of nature occur only rarely to serve some great purpose or cause. However, the usual phenomena to which we are accustomed in our daily lives cannot be made an argument to say that Allah's power has been tied up with these, and nothing unusual can take place even by Allah's command.

(40) "Indeed, in that are sure signs for a people who believe". Signs for the believers in this that the Prophet Abraham (peace be

upon him) did not follow the religion of his family, community and country but followed the true knowledge through which he came to know that shirk is falsehood and Tauhid is the reality. And that he went on exhorting his people to accept the truth and to desist from falsehood in spite of their stubbornness and prejudices. And that he was even prepared to suffer the horrible punishment by the fire, but was not prepared to give up the truth. And that Allah did not even spare the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), His friend, from the trials and tests. And that when the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) got successfully through the tests set by Allah, then did come Allah's succor, and in such a miraculous way that the bonfire was turned cool for him.

وَ قَالَ اِنَّمَا اتَّخَذۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ اَوۡثَانًا مَّوَدَّةَ بَيۡنِكُمۡ فِى الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ۚ ثُمَّ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ يَكۡفُرُ بَعۡضُكُمۡ بِبَعۡضٍ وَّ يَلۡعَنُ بَعۡضُكُمۡ بَعۡضًا وَّ مَاۡوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ وَ مَا لَكُمۡ مِّنۡ نّٰصِرِيۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾

(29-25) He said: (41) "You have taken up idols instead of Allah as a bond of love among yourselves (42) in the present life, but on the Day of Resurrection you will disown and curse one another. (43) Your refuge shall be the Fire, and none will come to your aid."

(41) The Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) must have said this after his safe deliverance from the fire.

(42) That is, you have built up your collective life on the foundation of idol worship instead of God worship. This can keep you bound together as a nation only to the extent of mundane life. For here in this world people can get together around any creed, true or false. Any kind of agreement and concord on any belief, however wrong and ill conceived, can become a means of the establishment of mutual friendships, kinships, brotherhoods, and all other religious, social, cultural, economic and political relationships.

(43) That is, the collective life that you have built on the false creed in the world cannot endure in the Hereafter. Only those relationships of love and friendship and cooperation and kinship and mutual regard and esteem will endure there, which have

been based on the worship of One God and virtue and piety in the world. All relationships founded on disbelief and shirk and deviation will be severed, and all kinds of love will change into enmity and hatred. The son and the father, the husband and the wife, the saint and the disciple, all will curse each other, and each will blame his deviation on the other, and will say, “This wicked person led me astray: he should be given a double punishment.” This thing has been stated at several places in the Quran. For example, in Surah Az-Zukhruf, it has been said: “Friends on that Day shall become enemies of one another, except the righteous,” (Ayat 67). In Surah Al- Aaraf: “As each generation will be entering Hell, it will curse its preceding generation till all generations shall be gathered together there: then each succeeding generation will say regarding the preceding one; O Lord, these were the people who led us astray; therefore, give them a double chastisement of the Fire,” (Ayat 38). And in Surah Al- Ahzab: “And they will say; Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and our great men, and they led us astray from the right path. Lord, give them a doable chastisement and curse them severely,” (Ayats. 67-68).

فَاٰمَنَ لَهٗ لُوْطٌ ۘ وَ قَالَ اِنِّیْ مُهَاجِرٌ اِلٰی رَبِّیْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الْحَكِیْمُ ﴿۲۶﴾

(29-26) Then did Lot believe him, (44) and Abraham said: “I am emigrating unto my Lord. (45) He is All-Powerful, All-Wise,” (46)

(44) The context shows that when the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) came out of the fire and spoke the preceding sentences, only Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) from the entire crowd came forward to proclaim his belief and adopt his obedience. It is just possible that many other people also on this occasion might have been convinced of the Prophet Abraham’s (peace be upon him) being a true prophet, but in view of the violent reaction that had been shown openly by the entire community and the government against Abraham’s faith, no one else could muster up courage to affirm faith in such a dangerous truth and follow it. This good fortune fell to the lot of only one man, the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), the nephew of the

Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), who at last accompanied his uncle and aunt Sarah in their migration also.

Here, the question may arise: Was the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) a disbeliever and a mushrik before this, and did he believe only after witnessing the miracle of the Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) emerging safe and sound from the fire? If it is so, can a person who has been a mushrik be appointed to prophethood? The answer is this: Here the Quran has used the words fa-amana la-hu Lut, which do not necessarily imply that the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) disbelieved in God before this, or associated other deities with Him. They only show that after this he confirmed the Prophethood of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), and adopted his obedience. Possibly the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) was a young boy then and this might be the first very occasion when he became acquainted with the teachings of his uncle and his prophethood.

(45) That is, “I shall leave my country for the sake of my Lord and go wherever my Lord may take me.”

(46) That is, “He possesses the power to help and protect me, and whatever He decides for me will be based on wisdom.”

وَ وَهَبۡنَا لَہٗۤ اِسۡحٰقَ وَ یَعۡقُوۡبَ وَ جَعَلۡنَا فِیۡ ذُرِّیَّتِہِ النُّبُوَّۃَ وَ الۡکِتٰبَ وَ اٰتَیۡنٰہُ اَجۡرَہٗ فِی الدُّنۡیَا ۚ وَ اِنَّہٗ فِی الۡاٰخِرَۃِ لَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِیۡنَ ﴿۲۷﴾

(29-27) and We bestowed upon him (offspring like) Isaac and Jacob, (47) and bestowed prophethood and the Book (48) on his descendants and granted him his reward in this world; he will certainly be among the righteous (49) in the Hereafter.

(47) The Prophet Isaac (peace be upon him) was his son and the Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him) was the grandson. The other sons of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) have not been mentioned here, because from his Midianite descendants only the Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) was appointed a Prophet, and no Prophet was born among his Ishmaelite descendants for 2500 years or so till our Prophet Muhammad

(peace be upon him). Contrary to this, the descendants of the Prophet Isaac (peace be upon him) continued to be blessed with the prophethood and the Book till the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him).

(48) This covers all the Prophets who were raised from all the branches of the Prophet Abraham's (peace be upon him) progeny.

(49) What is meant to be said is this: The rulers and the learned men and the priests of Babylon who tried to defeat the mission of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and the polytheistic people who had followed their wicked chiefs blindly, have since been blotted out and no trace of them is to be found anywhere in the world, but the person whom they had wanted to annihilate by burning in the fire only because he had proclaimed the word of Allah, and who eventually had to leave his country empty handed, was so blessed by Allah that his name has been well known in the world since the past 4,000 years and will remain so till the Last Day. All the Muslims and the Christians and the Jews unanimously recognize that friend of the Lord of the worlds as their spiritual leader. Whatever guidance mankind has received during the past 40 centuries has been received through this one man and his righteous descendants. The unique reward that he will get in the Hereafter is assured, but the place of honor that he has gained even in this world has not been gained so far by any of those who have exerted themselves in pursuit of the worldly benefits and advantages.

وَ لُوطًا اِذۡ قَالَ لِقَوۡمِهٖۤ اِنَّكُمۡ لَتَاۡتُوۡنَ الۡفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمۡ بِهَا مِنۡ اَحَدٍ مِّنَ الۡعٰلَمِيۡنَ ﴿۲۸﴾

(29-28) We sent Lot [50] and he said to his people: “You commit the abomination that none in the world ever committed before you.

(50) For comparison, see (Surah Al-Araf: Ayats 80-84); (Surah Hud: Ayats 69-83); (Surah Al-Hijr: Ayats 57-79); (Surah Al-Anbiyaa: Ayats 71-75); (Surah Ash-Shuaraa: Ayats 160-175); (Surah An-Naml: Ayats 54 59); (Surah As-Safat: Ayats 133-138); (Surah Al-Qamar: Ayats 33-40).

اَئِنَّكُمۡ لَتَاۡتُوۡنَ الرِّجَالَ وَ تَقۡطَعُوۡنَ السَّبِيۡلَ ۙ وَ تَاۡتُوۡنَ فِىۡ نَادِيۡكُمُ الۡمُنۡكَرَ ؕ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوۡمِهٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ قَالُوا ائۡتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ اِنۡ كُنۡتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۲۹﴾

(29-29) What! Do you go to men [51] (to satisfy your lust), engage in highway robbery, and commit evil deeds in your gatherings?” [52] Then they had no answer to offer other than to say: “Bring Allah's chastisement upon us if you are truthful.”

(51) That is, “You satisfy your sex desire with the males.” As stated in (Surah Al-Araf: Ayat 81), “you gratify your lust with men instead of women.”

(52) That is, “You do not even hide yourself when you commit this filthy act, but commit it openly in your assemblies, in front of others.” The same has been stated in (Surah An-Naml: Ayat 54), thus: “Do you commit the indecency while you see it?”

قَالَ رَبِّ انۡصُرۡنِىۡ عَلَى الۡقَوۡمِ الۡمُفۡسِدِيۡنَ ﴿۳۰﴾

(29-30) Lot said: “My Lord, aid me against these mischievous people.”

وَ لَمَّا جَآءَتۡ رُسُلُنَاۤ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ بِالۡبُشۡرٰى ۙ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا مُهۡلِكُوۡۤا اَهۡلِ هٰذِهِ الۡقَرۡيَةِ ۚ اِنَّ اَهۡلَهَا كَانُوۡا ظٰلِمِيۡنَ ﴿۳۱﴾

(29-31) When Our emissaries brought the good news [53] to Abraham, and said (to him): “We are surely going to destroy the inhabitants[54] of this city; its inhabitants are immersed in wrong-doing.”

(53) According to the details given of this in Surah Hud and Surah A1-Hijr, the angels who had been sent to bring the torment on the people of the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), first came to the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and gave him the good news of the birth of the Prophet Isaac (peace be upon him) and after him of the Prophet Jacob (peace be upon him). Then they told him that they had been sent to destroy the people of Lot (peace be upon him).

(54) “This habitation” refers to the territory of the people of Lot (peace be upon him). The Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) at that time resided in the Palestinian city of Hebron, now called Al-Khalil. A few miles to the southeast of this city lies that part of the Dead Sea, which was once inhabited by the people of Lot (peace be upon him) and which is now under sea water. It is a low lying area and is clearly visible from the hill country of Hebron. That is why the angels, pointing towards it, had said "We are going to destroy this habitation." See(E.N. 114 of Surah Ash- Shuara).

قَالَ إِنَّ فِيهَا لُوطًا ۚ قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن فِيهَا ۖ لَنُنَجِّيَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا
امْرَأَتَهُ ۖ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

(29-32) Abraham said: “But Lot is there.” [55] They replied: “We are well aware of those who are there. We shall save him and all his household except his wife.” His wife is among those who will stay behind. [56]

(55) According to the initial part of this story as related in Surah Hud, the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) at first was perturbed to see the angels in human shape, for he knew that the coming of the angels in human shape was always a prelude to some dangerous mission. Then, when they gave him the good news, his fear was allayed and he came to know that they had been sent to the people of Lot (peace be upon him). Then he

began making entreaties of mercy for those people (Surah Hud: Ayats 74-75), but his entreaties were not granted, and it was said: “Do not plead for them any more: your Lord’s decree has been issued, and the punishment now cannot be averted,” (Ayat 76). After this answer, when the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) lost all hopes of any increase in the respite of Lot’s (peace be upon him) people, he became anxious about the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) himself, and said, what has been related here: “Lot (peace be upon him) is there.” That is, “If the torment comes down when Lot (peace be upon him) is there, how will he and his household remain safe from it?”

(56) According to (Surah Tahrim: Ayat 10), this woman was not faithful to the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him). That is why it was decreed that she too, would be afflicted with the torment in spite of being a Prophet’s wife. Most probably when the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) had come to Jordan after the migration and settled there, he might have married among the people living there. But the woman did not believe even after spending a lifetime with him, and her sympathies remained with her own people. As Allah has no consideration for relationships and brotherhoods and every person’s case is decided on the basis of his own faith and morality, even being a Prophet’s wife did not profit her in any way and she met her doom along with her own people with whom she had remained attached in faith and morality.

وَ لَمَّا ۟ لَ جَآءَ رُسُلُنَا لُ ۟طٰاسِ ۪يٰٓءِيم وَ ضَاقَ ۪بِم ذَ رًۢا وَّ قَالُ۟وا لَا
تَخَ ف۟ وَ لَا تَح۟ زَ ۪نِ اِنَّا مُنَجُّ ۟كَ وَ اَ لَكَ اِلَّا ا ۪وَرَاَتَكَ كَانَ ۫ مِنَ ۟لغٰبِ ۪رِ ۟ ۳۳

(29-33) When Our emissaries came to Lot he was distressed and embarrassed on their account. They said: “Do not fear nor be distressed. (58) We shall save you and all your household except your wife who is among those that will stay behind.

(58) That is, “As for us, you should neither fear that they will in any way he able to harm us, nor be anxious about how you will protect us from them.” This was the time when the angels revealed their identity to the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), and said that they were not men but angels, who had been sent to bring the scourge on his people. According to the elucidation in Surah Hud, when the people were rushing into Lot’s (peace be upon him) house and he felt that he could in no way save his guests from them, he cried out: “I wish I had the power to set you right, or I could find some strong support for refuge,” (Ayat 80). At this time the angels said: “O Lot, we are messengers sent by your Lord; they will not be able to harm you at all,” (Ayat 81).

اِنَّا مُ ۫نزِلُ۫ نَ عَلٰٓى اَهۡلِ ۟هٰذِ ۟ اِ ۟قۡ ۪رِ ۟زًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَا كَانُ۟ ا۟ وَ ۪سُقُ۫نَ ۟ ۳۴

(29-34) We shall bring down upon the people of this city a scourge from the heaven because of their evildoing.”

وَ لَقَد تَّرَ ۟كنَا مِ ۫نَ ۢا۠يَا ۢ بَيِّنَ ۢ لِّقَ ۫مٍ يَّ ۟عۡ ۪قِلُ۫ نَ ۟ ۳۵

(29-35) And We have left a vestige of it in that city as a Clear Sign (57), (58), (59) for a people who use their reason. (60)

(57) The reason for this anxiety and distress was that the angels had come in the shape of handsome, young boys. The Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) was aware of his people’s morals. Therefore, he became perturbed at their arrival. He distress was based on what, “If I receive these guests in my house, it will be difficult to save them from the immoral people; if I do not receive them, it will be highly uncivil and unbecoming of

the noble people. Moreover, if I do not provide shelter to these travelers, they will stay the night elsewhere, which would mean that I have myself given them away to the wicked people." What happened after this has not been related here. But according to the details given in Surahs Hud, Surah Al-Hijr and Surah Al-Qamar, the people of the city thronged to the Prophet Lot's (peace be upon him) house and insisted that the guests be handed over to them for immorality.

(58) That is, "As for us, you should neither fear that they will in any way he able to harm us, nor be anxious about how you will protect us from them." This was the time when the angels revealed their identity to the Prophet Lot (peace be upon him), and said that they were not men but angels, who had been sent to bring the scourge on his people. According to the elucidation in Surah Hud, when the people were rushing into Lot's (peace be upon him) house and he felt that he could in no way save his guests from them, he cried out: "I wish I had the power to set you right, or I could find some strong support for refuge," (Ayat 80). At this time the angels said: "O Lot, we are messengers sent by your Lord; they will not be able to harm you at all," (Ayat 81).

(59) "A clear sign": the Dead Sea, which is also called Sea of Lot. The Quran at several places has addressed the disbelievers of Makkah, saying, "A sign of the torment that visited this wicked people on account of their misdeeds still exists on the highway, which you see night and day during your trade journeys to Syria." (Surah Al-Hijr: Ayat 76); (Surah As-Safat: Ayat 137). Today it is being admitted with near certainty that the southern end of the Dead Sea came into being as a result of a violent earthquake when the area in which Sodom, the central city of the people of Lot, was located sank underground. In this part there are still signs of some submerged habitations. Exploratory attempts are being made with the modern diving apparatus but the results are still awaited. see (E. N. 114 of Surah Ash- Shuara).

(60) For the Islamic punishment of sodomy, see(E.N. 68 of Surah Al-Araf).

وَ اِلٰی مَدۡیَنَ اَخَاہُمۡ شُعَیۡبًا ۙ فَقَالَ یٰقَوۡمِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰہَ وَ ارۡجُوا الۡیَوۡمَ الۡاٰخِرَ وَ لَا تَعۡثَوۡا فِی
الۡاَرۡضِ مُفۡسِدِیۡنَ ﴿۳۶﴾

(29-36) And We sent to Midian their brother Shuayb. (61) He said: “My people, serve Allah and look forward to the Last Day (62) and do not go about the earth committing mischief.”

(61) For comparison, see (Surah Al-Araf: Ayats 85-93), (Surah Hud: Ayats 84-96), (Surah Ash-Shuara: Ayats 177- 191).

(62) This can have two meanings: (1) “Look forward to the life of Hereafter, and do not think that there is no life after this worldly life, when you will have to render an account of your deeds and be rewarded or punished accordingly.” (2) “Work righteously so as to meet a good end in the Hereafter.”

فَکَذَّبُوۡہُ فَاَخَذَتۡہُمُ الرَّجۡفَۃُ فَاَصۡبَحُوۡا فِیۡ دَارِہِمۡ جٰثِمِیۡنَ ﴿۳۷﴾

(29-37) But they denounced him as a liar. (63) So a mighty earthquake overtook them, and by the morning they lay overturned in their houses. (64)

(63) That is, “They did not believe that the Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) was a Messenger of Allah and the teachings he gave were from Allah and that if they rejected him they would be punished by a torment from Allah.”

(64) “Dwelling places”: the whole area and country inhabited by them.

وَ عَادًا وَّ ثَمُوۡدَا۠ وَ قَدۡ تَّبَیَّنَ لَکُمۡ مِّنۡ مَّسٰکِنِہِمۡ ۫ وَ زَیَّنَ لَہُمُ الشَّیۡطٰنُ
اَعۡمَالَہُمۡ فَصَدَّہُمۡ عَنِ السَّبِیۡلِ وَ کَانُوۡا مُسۡتَبۡصِرِیۡنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

(29-38) And We destroyed Ad and Thamud, whose dwellings you have observed. (65) Satan had embellished their deeds for them and had turned them away from the Right Path although they were a people of clear perception. (66)

(65) Every Arab was acquainted with the lands where these two nations had lived. The whole of southern Arabia now known as Ahqaf, Yaman and Hadramaut, was the land of Aad in the ancient times, and the Arabs knew it. The whole area in the north of the Hijaz, from Rabigh to Aqabah and from Madinah and Khaiber to Taima and Tabuk. still abounds with Thamudic monuments, which must have been more prominent than they are today in the time when the Quran was being revealed.

(66) That is, “They were not ignorant and foolish people, but were the most civilized people of their own times. They performed and carried out their worldly duties and chores very carefully and intelligently. Therefore, it cannot be said that Satan deluded them and pulled them on to his way by artifice and deception. Nay, they adopted the way shown by Satan with open eyes and with full understanding because it promised great pleasures and advantages; and they abandoned the way presented by the prophets because it appeared to be colorless, tasteless and troublesome due to moral restrictions.”

وَ قَارُوۡ نَ وَ فِرۡ عَوۡنَ وَ هَامٰنَ ۟ وَ لَقَدۡ جَآءَهُمۡ مُّوۡسٰی بِالۡبَیِّنٰتِ فَاسۡتَکۡبَرُوۡا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا کَانُوۡا سٰبِقِیۡنَ ۚ﴿۳۹﴾

(29-39) And We destroyed Qarun (Korah) and Pharaoh and Haman. Moses came to them with Clear Signs but they waxed arrogant in the land although they could not have outstripped [67] (Us).

(67) That is, “They could not have gotten away and escaped Allah’s grasp: they had no power to frustrate and defeat Allah’s plans and schemes.”

فَکُلًّا اَخَذۡنَا بِذَنۡۢبِہٖ ۚ فَمِنۡہُمۡ مَّنۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَیۡہِ حَاصِبًا ۚ وَ مِنۡہُمۡ مَّنۡ اَخَذَتۡہُ الصَّیۡحَۃُ ۚ وَ مِنۡہُمۡ مَّنۡ خَسَفۡنَا بِہِ الۡاَرۡضَ ۚ وَ مِنۡہُمۡ مَّنۡ اَغۡرَقۡنَا ۚ وَ مَا کَانَ اللّٰہُ لِیَظۡلِمَہُمۡ وَ لٰکِنۡ کَانُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَہُمۡ یَظۡلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۴۰﴾

(29-40) So We seized each for their sin. We let loose upon some a violent tornado with showers of stones; [68] some were overtaken by a mighty Cry; [69] some were caused to be

swallowed up by the earth, [70] and some We drowned. [71] Allah would not wrong them, but it is they who wronged themselves. [72]

(68) That is, Aad who were subjected to a furious windstorm which blew on them for seven nights and eight days continuously.

(69) That is, Thamud.

(70) That is, Korah.

(71) That is, Pharaoh and Haman.

(72) The stories that have been related in the foregoing verses, have been addressed and directed both to the believers and to the disbelievers. To the believers they have been addressed so that they do not feel discouraged and distressed at heart, and keep aloft the banner of the truth firmly and patiently even in the face of the severe persecutions and hardships, and should have full faith in Allah that His succor shall ultimately come, and He will frustrate the designs of the wicked people and make the word of the truth to prevail. On the other hand, these have been addressed to those wicked people also, who in their arrogance were bent upon exterminating the Islamic movement. They have been warned to the effect: “You have formed a wrong opinion about Allah’s forbearance and clemency. You think; that His is a lawless Kingdom. If you have not been seized so far for your rebellion and your tyrannies and wicked deeds and have been granted a long respite so that you may reform yourselves, you have inferred that there exists no power whatsoever which can call you to account, and that one can go on doing whatever one likes endlessly on this earth. This misconception will ultimately lead you to the same doom that has already been met by the peoples of Noah and Lot and Shuaib, (peace be upon them) and experienced by Aad and Thamud, and seen by Korah and Pharaoh.

مَثَلُ الَّذِيۡنَ اتَّخَذُوۡا مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ اَوۡلِيَآءَ كَمَثَلِ الۡعَنۡكَبُوۡتِ ۚ اِتَّخَذَتۡ بَيۡتًا ؕ وَاِنَّ اَوۡهَنَ الۡبُيُوۡتِ لَبَيۡتُ الۡعَنۡكَبُوۡتِ ۘ لَوۡ كَانُوۡا يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۴۱﴾

(29-41) The case of those who took others than Allah as their protectors is that of a spider who builds a house; but the frailest of all houses is the spider's house; if they only knew. (73)

(73) All the above mentioned nations were involved in shirk, and their belief about their deities was that they were their supporters and helpers and guardians, and had the power to make or mar their destinies. So when they will have won their goodwill by worship and presentation of offerings, they will succor them in need and protect them against calamities and afflictions. But, as shown by the historical events cited above, all their beliefs and superstitions proved to be baseless when their destruction was decreed by Allah. Then no god, and no god incarnate, and no saint or spirit, and no jinn or angel, whom they worshiped came to their rescue, and they met their destruction with the realization that their expectations and beliefs had been false and futile. After relating these events, Allah is now warning the mushriks to the effect: The reality of the toy-house of expectations that you have built on your faith in the powerless servants and imaginary deities, apart from the real Master and Ruler of the universe, is no more than the cobweb of a spider. Just as a cobweb cannot stand the slightest interference by a finger, so will the toy-house of your expectations collapse in its first clash with the scheme of Allah. It is nothing but ignorance that you are involved in the web of superstition. If you had any knowledge of the reality, you would not have built your system of life on baseless props. The fact is that none other than the One Lord of the worlds in this universe is the Owner of power and authority, and His support is the only support which is reliable. “Now whoever rejects taghut and believes in Allah has taken a firm support that never gives way. And Allah hears everything and knows everything,” (Surah Al- Baqarah: Ayat 256).

اِنَّ اللّٰہَ یَعۡلَمُ مَا یَدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِہٖ مِنۡ شَیۡءٍ ؕ وَ ہُوَ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَکِیۡمُ ﴿۴۲﴾

(29-42) Surely Allah knows fully what they call upon apart from Him. He is the Most Powerful, the Most Wise. (74)

(74) That is, Allah knows fully the reality of those beings and things which they have taken as their deities and which they invoke for help. They are absolutely powerless. The Owner of power is only Allah, Who is controlling the system of this universe according to His own wisdom and design. Another translation of this verse can be: "Allah knows well that of those whom they invoke, apart from Him, are nonentities, and He alone is the All Mighty, the All-Wise."

وَتِلْكَ الْاَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ ۚ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَآ اِلَّا الْعٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾

(29-43) These are the parables that We set forth to make people understand. But only those endowed with knowledge will comprehend them.

خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾

(29-44) Allah has created the heavens and the earth in Truth. (75) Certainly there is a Sign in this for those who believe. (76)

(75) That is, the system of the universe is based on the truth and not on falsehood. Whoever ponders over this system with an unbiased mind will realize that the earth and the heavens owe their existence to reality and fact and not to superstition and fancy. Here there is no possibility that whatever a person may conceive in his mind and whatever philosophy he may invent out of his personal whim and conjecture should fit in with the system. Here only such a thing can succeed and endure, which is in harmony with the reality and actual fact. A structure that is raised on unreal presumptions and hypotheses will ultimately collapse when it clashes with the reality. The system of the universe clearly testifies that its Creator is One God, and One God alone is its Master and Disposer. If a person works against this basic reality on the presumption that this world has no God, or that it has many gods, who devour the offerings of their devotees and in return give them a license to do whatever they please and a guarantee to live in peace and happiness, the reality will not change due to his presumptions, but, on the contrary, he himself will some time meet with a grave disaster.

(76) That is, a clear evidence exists in the creation of the earth and the heavens about the truth of Tauhid and the refutation of polytheism and atheism, but this evidence is found only by those who accept the teachings of the Prophets of Allah. Those who deny them do not find it even though they see everything.

اُتۡلُ مَاۤ اُوۡحِیَ اِلَیۡکَ مِنَ الۡکِتٰبِ وَ اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوۃَ ؕ اِنَّ الصَّلٰوۃَ تَنۡہٰی عَنِ الۡفَحۡشَآءِ وَ الۡمُنۡکَرِ ؕ وَ لَذِکۡرُ اللّٰہِ اَکۡبَرُ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ یَعۡلَمُ مَا تَصۡنَعُوۡنَ ﴿۴۵﴾

(29-45) (O Prophet), recite the Book that has been revealed to you and establish Prayer. (77) Surely Prayer forbids indecency and evil.(78) And Allah's remembrance is of even greater merit. (79) Allah knows all that you do.

(77) The address apparently is directed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) but, in fact, it is meant for all the believers. Until now they were being counseled patience and reliance on Allah to brave the extreme trying conditions in which they found themselves, and the persecutions they were being subjected to on account of their faith. Now they are being told to recite the Quran and establish the Salat as a practical device, for these are the two things which endow a believer with a strong character and a wonderful capacity by which he can not only brave successfully the most violent storms of evil and falsehood but can even subdue them. But man can acquire this power from the recitation of the Quran and the prayer only when he does not remain content with the mere recital of the words but also understands well the Quranic teachings and absorbs them in his soul. And his prayer does not remain confined to physical movements but becomes the very function of his heart and the motive force for his morals and character. The desired quality of the prayer is being mentioned by the Quran itself in the next sentence. As for its recitation, one should know that the recitation which does not reach the heart beyond the throat, cannot even give man enough power to remain steadfast to his faith, not to speak of enabling him to withstand the furies of unbelief. About such people, a Hadith says: “They will recite the Quran, but the

Quran will not go beyond their throats; they will leave the faith just as the arrow leaves the bow." (Bukhari, Muslim, Muatta). As a matter of fact, the recitation which does not effect any change in a man's way of thinking, and his morals and character, and he goes on doing what the Quran forbids, is not the recitation of a believer at all. About such a one the Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: "He who makes lawful what the Quran has declared unlawful, has not believed in the Quran at all." (Tirmidhi). Such a recitation does not reform and strengthen a man's self and spirit, but makes him even more stubborn against Allah and impudent before his own conscience, and destroys his character altogether. For the case of the person who believes in the Quran as a divine Book, reads it and comes to know what his God has enjoined, and then goes on violating His injunctions, is of the culprit, who commits a crime not due to ignorance but after full knowledge of the law. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has elucidated this point in a brief sentence, thus: "The Quran is a testimony in your favor as well as against you," (Muslim). That is, "If you follow the Quran rightly, it is a testimony in your favor. Whenever you are called to account for your deeds, here or in the Hereafter, you can produce the Quran as a testimony in your defense, saying that whatever you did was in accordance with this Book. If what you did was precisely according to it, no jurist in the world will be able to punish you, nor will God in the Hereafter hold you accountable for it. But if this Book has reached you, and you have read it and found out what your Lord demands from you, what He enjoins and what He forbids, and then you adopt an attitude opposed to it, then this Book will be a testimony against you. It will further strengthen the criminal case against you in the court of God. Then it will in no way be possible for you to escape the punishment, or receive a light punishment, by making the excuse of ignorance.

(78) This is an important characteristic out of the many characteristics of the prayer, which has been presented here prominently in view of its relevance to the context. To counter the severe storm of opposition and resistance that the Muslims were experiencing in Makkah, they stood in need of a moral force rather than any material power. To bring about the moral force and develop it suitably two practical devices were pointed out in

the first instance, the recitation of the Quran and the establishment of the Salat. Now they are being told that the establishment of the Salat is the means through which they can get rid of those evils in which they themselves had been involved before they embraced Islam and in which the non-Muslim Arabs and the non Arab world around them were involved at that time. With a little thinking one can easily understand why this special advantage of the prayer has been particularly mentioned here. Evidently, getting rid of the moral evils is not only useful insofar as it is beneficial for those who attain the moral purity, both here and in the Hereafter, but its inevitable advantage is that it gives them unique superiority over those who might be involved in diverse moral evils, and who might be exerting their utmost to sustain the impure system of ignorance, which nourishes those evils, against the efforts of the morally pure people. Indecent and evil acts are those which man by nature abhors, and which have always been held as evil in principle by the people of every community and society, however depraved and perverted practically. The Arab society in the days of the revelation of the Quran was no exception to this. Those people also were aware of the moral virtues and the evils: they valued the good above the evil and there might be none among them, who regarded the evil as identical with the good, or depreciated goodness. Under such conditions, in a perverted society like that, the emergence of a movement which revolutionized morally members of the same society itself as soon as they came into contact with it, and raised them in character high above their contemporaries, inevitably had widespread effects. The common Arabs could not possibly fail to feel the moral impact of the movement, which eradicated evils and promoted goodness. And could not go on following those who were morally corrupt and were fighting to sustain a system of ignorance which had been nourishing those evils since centuries. That is why the Quran at that time exhorted the Muslims to establish Salat instead of urging them to collect material resources and force and strength that could win over the people’s hearts and defeat the enemy without any material force.

The virtue of the prayer that has been mentioned here has two aspects: Its essential and inseparable quality that it

restrains from evil and indecent acts, and its desired quality that the one who performs it should, in fact, refrain from evil and indecent acts. As for the first quality the prayer does restrain people from the evils. Anyone who ponders a little over the nature of the prayer will admit that of all the checks and brakes that can be put on man to restrain him from the evils, the prayer can be the most effective. After all, what check could be more effective than this that man should be called upon five times a day for the remembrance of Allah and made to remind himself again and again that he is not wholly free and independent in this world but is the servant of One God, and his God is He Who is aware of his open as well as hidden acts, even of the most secret aims and intentions of his heart, and a time will surely come when he will have to account for all his deeds before his God. Then he is not only reminded of this but is given practical training at every prayer time that he should not disobey any of his God's commands even secretly. From the time that he stands up for the prayer till its completion man has to perform continuously certain acts in which there is no third person, besides him and his God, who can know whether he has obeyed God's law or, disobeyed it. For instance, if the man's wudu (state of ablutions) has become void and he stands up for the prayer, there can be no one, besides him and God, who will know that he is no longer in the state of wudu. If the man has expressed no intention of the prayer but just goes on performing all the required movements and recites poetry, for instance, instead of the prescribed texts quietly, there is none, besides him and his God who can be aware of the secret that he has not, in fact, performed his prayer at all. Not with standing this, if a person offers the prayer five times a day, fulfilling faithfully all the conditions of the divine law in respect of the cleanliness of the body and dress, and the essentials of the prayer and its recitation, etc. it means that through this prayer his conscience is being awakened to life several times a day, he is being helped to become a responsible and dutiful person, and he is being practically trained that he should, under his own urge of obedience, abide by the law which he has believed in openly as well as secretly, regardless whether there is any external force to make him abide by it or not, and

whether the people of the world have any knowledge of his intentions and deeds or not.

Thus considered, one cannot help admitting that the prayer not only restrains man from the evils and indecencies but, in fact, there is no other method of training in the world which may be so effective as the prayer is in restraining man from the evils. As for the question whether or not man in actual fact refrains from the evils even after attendance at the prayer, this depends upon the man himself, who is undergoing training for self reform. If he has the intention to benefit from it, and endeavors for it, the reformatory effects of the prayer will certainly have their impact on him. Otherwise, evidently, no reformatory device in the world can be effective with a person, who is not prepared to receive any impact of it, or tries to avoid its impact intentionally. This can be explained by an example. The essential quality of food is to nourish the body and develop it. But this advantage can be had only when food is allowed to be assimilated. If a person vomits what he eats after every meal, his food cannot profit him in any way. Just as, keeping such a person in view, one cannot say that food is not nutritious for the body, because so and so is becoming a skeleton in spite of eating food. So, one cannot present the example of an unrighteous performer of the prayer and say that the prayer does not restrain from the evils, because so and so is unrighteous in spite of his prayer. Just as about such a person it will be apt to say that he does not offer the prayer at all, so about the person who vomits everything he eats, it will be apt to say that he does not eat his food at all.

Precisely the same thing has been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) and some great companions and their followers. Imran bin Husain reports that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “He whose prayer did not restrain him from the evil and indecent acts, offered no prayer at all,” (Ibn Abi Hatim). Ibn Abbas has reported the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying: “The prayer which did not restrain a person from the evil and indecent acts, led him further away from Allah.” (Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani). A Hadith containing the same theme has been reported by Hasan Basri directly from the Prophet (peace be upon

him). Another Hadith reported on the authority of Ibn Masud is to the effect: “He who did not obey the prayer, offered no prayer at all, and obedience to the prayer is that one should refrain from the evil and indecent acts.” (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim). Several sayings to the same effect have been reported on the authority of Abdullah bin Masud, Abdullah bin Abbas, Hasan Basri, Qatadah and Aamash, etc. Imam Jafar Sadiq has said: He who wants to know whether his prayer has been accepted or not, should see how far his prayer has restrained him from the evil and indecent acts. If he has been restrained from the evils, his prayer has been accepted, (Ruh-al Maani).

(79) This can have several meanings: (1) That the remembrance of Allah (i.e. prayer) is a thing of much higher value: it not only restrains from the evils but, over and above that, it induces people to act righteously and urges them to excel one another in good acts. (2) That Allah’s remembrance in itself is a great thing: it is the best of acts: no act of man is greater in value than this. (3) That Allah’s remembrance of you is a greater thing than your remembrance of Him. Allah has said in the Quran: “So remember Me: I will remember you.” (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayat 156). Thus, when the servant remembers Allah in the prayer, inevitably Allah also will remember him, and the merit of Allah’s remembering his servant is certainly greater than the servant’s remembering Allah. Besides these three meanings, there is another subtle meaning also, which the wife of Abud Darda has explained. She says, “Allah’s remembrance is not restricted to the prayer, but, its sphere is much vaster. When a man observes a fast, or pays the Zakat or performs a righteous act, he inevitably remembers Allah. That is why the righteous act emanates from him. Likewise, when a man refrains from an evil act when an opportunity exists for it, even this also is the result of Allah’s remembrance. Thus, the remembrance of Allah pervades the entire life of a believer.

وَ لَا تُجَادِلُوۡۤا اَہۡلَ الۡکِتٰبِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِیۡ ہِیَ اَحۡسَنُ ۟ اِلَّا الَّذِیۡنَ ظَلَمُوۡا مِنۡہُمۡ وَ قُوۡلُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا بِالَّذِیۡۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَیۡنَا وَ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَیۡکُمۡ وَ اِلٰـہُنَا وَ اِلٰـہُکُمۡ وَاحِدٌ وَّ نَحۡنُ لَہٗ مُسۡلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۴۶﴾

(29-46) Argue not [80] with the People of the Book except in the fairest manner, [81] unless it be those of them that are utterly unjust. [82] Say to them: “We believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you. One is our God and your God; and we are those who submit [83] ourselves to Him.”

(80) It should be noted that a little below in this Surah the people are being exhorted to migrate. At that time Habash was the only place of safety to which the Muslims could migrate, and Habash in those days was under the domination of the Christians. Therefore, in these verses the Muslims are being instructed as to how they should argue and discuss matters concerning religion with the people of the Book when such an occasion arises.

(81) That is, the discussion should be conducted rationally, in a civilized and decent language, so that the ideas of the other person may be reformed. The preacher’s main aim should be to appeal to the addressee’s heart, convey the truth to him and bring him to the right path. He should not fight like a wrestler whose only object is to defeat his opponent. He should rather conduct himself like a physician who is ever cautious not to cause the patient’s ailment to worsen by any of his own mistakes, and tries to cure him with the least possible trouble. This instruction bas been given here especially in connection with the conduct of a discussion with the people of the Book, but is a general instruction pertaining to the preaching of the religion and it has been given at several places in the Quran. For example, “O Prophet, invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and excellent admonition and discuss things with the people in the best manner.” (Surah An-Nahl: Ayat 125). “O Prophet, goodness and evil are not alike, repel evil with what is best. You will see that he, with whom you had enmity, has become your closest friend.” (Surah Ha Mim As-Sajdah: Ayat 34). “O Prophet, repel evil with what is best: We are fully aware of what they utter against you.” (Surah Al-Muminun: Ayat 96). “O Prophet, adopt the way of leniency and forbearance; enjoin what is good and avoid useless discussions with the ignorant people. If Satan ever excites you to anger, seek refuge in Allah.” (Surah Al-Araf: Ayat 199-200).

(82) That is, with those who adopt an attitude of wickedness a different attitude may also be adopted according to the nature and extent of their wickedness. In other words, one cannot, and should not adopt a soft and gentle attitude towards all sorts of the people under all circumstances at all time, which might be mistaken for the weakness and meekness of the inviter to the truth. Islam does teach its followers to be polite, gentle and reasonable, but it does not teach them to be unduly humble and meek so that they are not taken for granted by every cruel and wicked person.

(83) In these sentences Allah has provided guidance to the best method of discussion, which the inviters to the truth should adopt. The method is this: “Do not make the error or deviation of the other person the basis and starting point of the discussion, but begin the discussion with those points of truth and justice which are common between you and your opponent. That is, the discussion should start from the points of agreement and not from the points of difference. Then, arguing from the agreed points, the addressee should be made to understand that, in the matter of the things in which you differ, your stand is in conformity with the agreed points whereas his stand is contradictory to them.

In this connection, one should bear in mind the fact that the people of the Book did not deny revelation, prophethood and Tauhid, like the polytheists of Arabia, but believed in these realities just like the Muslims. After agreement on these basic things, the main thing that could become the basis of difference between them could be that the Muslim would not believe in the divine scriptures sent down to them and would invite them to believe in the divine Book sent down to themselves, and would declare them disbelievers if they did not believe in it. This would have been a strong basis of their conflict. But the Muslims had a different stand. They believed as true all those Books that were with the people of the Book, and then also had believed in the revelation that had been sent down to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). After this it was for the people of the Book to tell the rational ground for which they believed in one Book sent by Allah and rejected the other. That is why Allah here has

instructed the Muslims that whenever they have to deal with the people of the Book, they should first of all present before them this very point of view in a positive manner. Say to them: “We believe in the same God in Whom you believe and we are obedient to Him. We have submitted ourselves to all those commands and injunctions and teachings that have come from Him, whether they were sent down to you, or to us. We are obedient servants of God and not of a country or a community or a race, that we should submit to God’s command when it is sent down in one place and reject it when it is sent down in another place. This thing has been repeated at several places in the Quran and particularly in relation to the people of the Book, it has been presented forcefully. For this, see (Surah Al-Baqarah: Ayats 4, 136, 177, 285); (Surah Ale-Imran: Ayat 84); (Surah An-Nisa: Ayats 136, 150 to 152, 162 to 164); (Surah Ash Shuaraa: Ayat 13).

وَ كَذٰلِكَ اَنۡزَلۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ الۡكِتٰبَ ؕ فَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُمُ الۡكِتٰبَ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِهٖ ۚ وَمِنۡ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَنۡ يُّؤۡمِنُ بِهٖ ؕ وَ مَا يَجۡحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اِلَّا الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ ﴿۴۷﴾

(29-47) (O Prophet), thus have We bestowed the Book on you. (84) So those on whom We had bestowed the Book before believe in it, (85) and of these (Arabs) too a good many believe in it. (86) It is none but the utter unbelievers who deny Our Signs. (87)

(84) This can have two meanings:

(1) Just as We had sent down the Books to the former Prophets, so We have sent down this Book to you; and

(2) We have sent down this Book with the teaching that it should be believed in not by rejecting Our former Books but by affirming faith in all of them.

85. The context itself shows that this does not imply all the people of the Book but only those who were blessed with the right understanding and the knowledge of the divine scriptures, and were the people of the Book in the true sense. When this last Book of Allah came before them, confirming His earlier Books, they did not show any stubbornness or obstinacy but accepted it sincerely as they had accepted the previous Books.

(86) “These people”: the people of Arabia. What it means to say is: The truth loving people, whether they already possess a divine Book or do not possess any, are affirming faith in it everywhere.

(87) Here, “the disbelievers” imply those people who are not prepared to give up their prejudices and accept the truth, or those who reject the truth because they do not want their lusts and their unbridled freedom to be subjected to restrictions.

وَ مَا كُنۡتَ تَتۡلُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلِهٖ مِنۡ كِتٰبٍ وَّ لَا تَخُطُّهٗ بِيَمِيۡنِكَ اِذًا لَّارۡتَابَ الۡمُبۡطِلُوۡنَ ۴۸

(29-48) (O Prophet), you did not recite any Book before, nor did you write it down with your hand; for then the votaries of falsehood would have had a cause for doubt. (88)

(88) This is the same argument that has already been given in Surahs Yunus and Al-Qasas as a proof of the Prophet’s Prophethood. See (E.N. 21 of Surah Yunus) and (E.N.'s 64 and 109 of Surah Al-Qasas). For further explanation, see (E.N. 107 of Surah An-Nahl), (E.N. 105 of Surah Bani Israil), (E.N. 66 of Surah Al-Muminun), (E.N. 12 of Surah Al- Furqan), and (E.N. 84 of Surah Ash-Shuara).

The basis of the argument in this verse is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was unlettered. His compatriots and his kinsmen among whom he had spent his whole life, from birth to old age, knew fully that he had never read a book nor ever handled a pen. Presenting this actual fact Allah says: This is a proof of the fact that the vast and deep knowledge of the teachings of the Divine Books, of the stories of the former Prophets, of the beliefs of the various religions and creeds, of the histories of the ancient nations, and the questions of social and moral and economic life, which is being presented through this unlettered man could not have been attained by him through any means but revelation. If he had been able to read and write and the people had seen him reading books and undertaking serious studies, the worshipers of falsehood could have had some basis for their doubts, that he had acquired the knowledge not through revelation but through study and reading. But the fact of his being

absolutely unlettered has left no basis whatsoever for any such doubt. Therefore, there can be no ground, except sheer stubbornness, which can be regarded as rational in any degree for denying his Prophethood.

بَلۡ هُوَ اٰيٰتٌۢ بَيِّنٰتٌ فِىۡ صُدُوۡرِ الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡعِلۡمَ ؕ وَمَا يَجۡحَدُ بِاٰيٰتِنَاۤ اِلَّا الظّٰلِمُوۡنَ ۴۹

(29-49) But it is a set of Clear Signs in the hearts of those who have been endowed with knowledge. (89) None except the utterly unjust will deny Our Signs.

(89) That is, the presentation of a Book like the Quran by an unlettered person, and the manifestation by him, all of a sudden, of extraordinary qualities of character while nobody ever noticed him making any preparation for these previously, are in fact the clearest signs which serve as pointers to his prophethood for those who are possessed of knowledge and wisdom." If one reviews the life-story of any great historical personage, one can always discover the factors in his environment, which molded his personality and prepared him for the excellences and qualities that emanated from him in life. There always exists a clear relationship between his environment and the component aspects of his personality. But no source whatever can be discovered in his environment of the wonderful qualities and excellences that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) displayed. In his case, neither in the contemporary Arab society nor in the society of the neighboring countries with which Arabia had any relations can one discover those factors which could have any remote relationship with the component aspects of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) personality. This is the reality on the basis of which it has been asserted here that the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) personality is not one sign but a collection of many clear signs. An ignorant person may not see any of these signs but those who are possessed of knowledge have become convinced in their hearts by seeing these signs that he is most certainly a true Prophet of Allah.

وَ قَالُوْا لَوْ لَاۤ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَا الْاٰيٰتُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ اِنَّمَاۤ اَنَا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۵۰﴾

(29-50) They say: “Why were Signs (90) from his Lord not sent down upon him?” Say: “The Signs are only with Allah. As for me, I am no more than a plain warner.”

(90) That is, miracles by seeing which one may be convinced that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is really a Prophet of Allah.

اَوَلَمۡ یَکۡفِہِمۡ اَنَّاۤ اَنۡزَلۡنَا عَلَیۡکَ الۡکِتٰبَ یُتۡلٰی عَلَیۡہِمۡ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَرَحۡمَۃً وَّ ذِکۡرٰی لِقَوۡمٍ یُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿۵۱﴾

(29-51) Does it not suffice for them (as a Sign) that We revealed to you the Book that is recited to them? (91) Surely there is mercy and good counsel in it for those who believe. (92)

(91) That is, “A Book like the Quran has been sent down to you in spite of your being unlettered. Is it not by itself a great miracle which should convince the people of your Prophethood? Do they yet need another miracle after this? The other miracles were the miracles for those who witnessed them. But this miracle is ever present in front of them. It is being recited before them almost daily; they can witness it as and when they like.” Even after such an assertion and argument by the Quran the audacity of those who try to prove that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was literate is astonishing. The fact, however, is that the Quran here has presented in clear terms the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) being illiterate as a strong proof of his prophethood. The traditions which lend support to the claim that the Prophet (peace be upon him) could read and write, or had learned reading and writing later in life, stand rejected at first glance, for no tradition opposed to the Quran can be acceptable. Then these traditions in themselves are too weak to become the basis for an argument. One of these is a tradition from Bukhari that when the peace treaty of Hudaibiya was being written down, the representative of the disbelievers of Makkah objected to the word Rasul-Allah being added to the name of the Prophet (peace be upon him). At this the Prophet ordered the writer (Ali, may Allah be pleased with him) to cross out the word Rasul-Allah and write Muhammad bin Abdullah instead. Ali refused to cross out Rasul-Allah. Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) took it in his own hand, struck out the word himself and wrote Muhammad bin Abdullah.

But this tradition from Bara bin Azib appears at four places in Bukhari and at two places in Muslim and everywhere in different words:

(1) At one place in Bukhari's Kitab-us-Sulh. The words of this tradition are to the effect: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) told Ali to strike out the words. He submitted that he could not do that. At last, the Prophet (peace be upon him) crossed them out with his own hand."

(2) In the same book the second tradition is to the effect: "Then he, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Ali: Cross out Rasul-Allah. He said: By God, I shall never cross out your name. At last, the Prophet (peace be upon him) took the document and wrote: This is the treaty concluded by Muhammad bin Abdullah."

(3) The third tradition, again from Bara bin Azib is found in Kitab-ul-Jizia in Bukhari to the effect: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself could not write. He said to Ali: Cross out Rasul-Allah. He submitted: By God, I shall never cross out these words. At this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Show me the place where these words are written. He showed him the place, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) crossed out the words with his own hand."

(4) The fourth tradition is in Bukhari's Kitab-ul-Maghazi to the effect: "So the Prophet (peace be upon him) took the document although he did not know writing, and he wrote: This is the treaty concluded by Muhammad bin Abdullah."

(5) Again from Bara bin Azib there is a tradition in Muslim (Kitab-ul-Jihad) saying that on Ali's refusal the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself wiped off the words Rasul- Allah.

(6) The second tradition from him in the same book says, "The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Ali: Show me where the word Rasul-Allah is written. Ali showed him the place, and he wiped it off and wrote Ibn Abdullah.

The disparity in the traditions clearly indicates that the intermediary reporters have not reported the words of Bara bin Azib (may Allah be pleased with him) accurately. Therefore, none of these reports can be held as perfectly reliable so that it could be said with certainty that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had written the words "Muhammad bin Abdullah" with his own hand. Probably when Ali, refused to wipe off the word Rasul-Allah, the Prophet might have himself wiped it off after finding out the place

where it was written, and then might have gotten the word Ibn Abdullah substituted by him or by some other writer. Other traditions show that there were two writers who were writing down the peace treaty; Ali and Muhammad bin Maslamah (Fath al-Bari). Therefore, it is not impossible that what one writer did not do was done by the other writer. However, if the Prophet (peace be upon him) actually wrote his name with his own hand, there are plenty instances of this in the world. The illiterate people learn to write their own name although they cannot read or write anything else.

The other tradition on whose basis it has been claimed that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was literate, has been reported by Ibn Abi Shaibah and Umar bin Shabbah from Mujahid. It says: “The Prophet (peace be upon him) had learned reading and writing before his death.” But in the first place, it is a weak tradition on account of its links as said by Hafiz Ibn Kathir: “It is weak: it has no basis.” Secondly, it is weak otherwise also, for if the Prophet (peace be upon him) had really learned reading and writing later in life, it would have become a well known fact. Many of the companions would have reported it, and it would also have been known from which person (or persons) he had learned this. But no one except one man, Aun bin Abdullah, from whom Mujahid heard this, has reported it. And this Aun was not even a companion, but a follower of the companions, who does not at all tell from which companion (or companions) he got this information. Evidently, on the basis of such weak traditions nothing which contradicts well known facts can become acceptable.

(92) That is, “The revelation of this Book is, without any doubt, a great bounty of Allah, and it contains great admonitions for the people. But only those people can benefit by it are those who believe in it.”

قُلۡ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ بَيۡنِىۡ وَبَيۡنَكُمۡ شَهِيۡدًا ۚ يَعۡلَمُ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا بِالۡبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡخٰسِرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۲﴾

(29-52) Say (O Prophet): “Allah suffices as a witness between me and you. He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth. As for those who believe in falsehood and are engaged in infidelity with Allah, it is they who will be the losers.”

وَيَسۡتَعۡجِلُوۡنَكَ بِالۡعَذَابِ ؕ وَلَوۡلَا اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى لَّجَآءَهُمُ الۡعَذَابُ ؕ وَلَيَاۡتِيَنَّهُمۡ بَغۡتَةً وَّهُمۡ لَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ﴿۵۳﴾

(29-53) They ask you to hasten in bringing chastisement [93] upon them. Had there not been an appointed term for it, the chastisement would have already visited them; in fact it will come down upon them all of a sudden (at its appointed time) while they will not be aware of it.

(93) That is, “They are challenging you again and again that If you are a true messenger and they are really denying the truth, then you should not delay the torment with which you threaten them.”

يَسۡتَعۡجِلُوۡنَكَ بِالۡعَذَابِ ؕ وَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيۡطَةٌ ۢ بِالۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ﴿۵۴﴾

(29-54) They ask you to hasten the chastisement upon them although Hell encompasses the unbelievers.

يَوۡمَ يَغۡشٰٮهُمُ الۡعَذَابُ مِنۡ فَوۡقِهِمۡ وَمِنۡ تَحۡتِ اَرۡجُلِهِمۡ وَيَقُوۡلُ ذُوۡقُوۡا مَا كُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۵۵﴾

(29-55) (They will become aware of it) the Day when the chastisement will overwhelm them from above and from under their feet, and He will say to them: “Taste now the consequence of the deeds that you used to commit.”

يٰعِبَادِىَ الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اِنَّ اَرۡضِىۡ وَاسِعَةٌ فَاِيَّاىَ فَاعۡبُدُوۡنِ ﴿۵۶﴾

(29-56) O My servants who believe, verily My earth is vast; so serve Me alone. [94]

(94) This is an allusion to the Hijrah, which implies this: if you feel that it is becoming difficult to worship God in Makkah, you may leave it and move to another place where you can live as the true servants of God, for God's earth is vast. You should serve Allah and not your nation and country. This shows that the real thing is not the nation and the home and the country but the worship of Allah. If at any time the demands of the nation and country's love clash with the demands of Allah's worship, it is the time of trial for the believer's faith. The true believer will worship Allah and spurn the nation and the country and home. The false claimant to the faith will abandon the faith and remain clinging to his nation and his country and home. This verse is clearly indicative of the fact that a true worshiper of God can be a patriot but he cannot be a worshiper of the nation and the country. For him the worship of God is the dearest thing in life for the sake of which he will sacrifice everything else, but with never be prepared to sacrifice it for anything else.

كُلُّ نَفۡسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ ٱلۡمَوۡتِ ثُمَّ إِلَيۡنَا تُرۡجَعُونَ ٥٧

(29-57) Every being shall taste death, then it is to Us that you shall be sent back. (95)

(95) That is, "Do not be anxious for your life: one has to die sooner or later. No one has come to live forever in this world. Therefore, your real problem is not how to save life, but your real problem is how to save your faith, and fulfill the requirements of God worship. You have ultimately to return to Us. If you lost your faith for the sake of saving your life, the result in the Hereafter will be different. But if you lost your life for the sake of saving your faith, the result will be just the opposite. Therefore, you should be anxious only about what you will bring when you return to Us. Will you come with a faith sacrificed for the sake of life, or a life sacrificed for the sake of the faith?"

وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُم مِّنَ ٱلۡجَنَّةِ غُرَفٗا تَجۡرِي مِن تَحۡتِهَا ٱلۡأَنۡهَٰرُ خَٰلِدِينَ فِيهَاۚ نِعۡمَ أَجۡرُ ٱلۡعَٰمِلِينَ ٥٨

(29-58) We shall house those who believed and acted righteously in the lofty mansions of Paradise beneath which rivers flow. There they shall remain for ever. How excellent a reward it is for those who acted (in obedience to Allah), (96)

(96) That is, “Even if you remained deprived of all the worldly blessings because of your faith and righteousness and ended up as a total failure from the worldly point of view, you should rest assured that you will be compensated for it; and not only compensated but rewarded excellently.”

الَّذِيۡنَ صَبَرُوۡا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمۡ يَتَوَكَّلُوۡنَ ﴿۵۹﴾

(29-59) who remained steadfast (97) and put their trust in their Lord! (98)

(97) “Who are patient: who remained steadfast in faith in the face of hardships and afflictions and losses and persecutions; who have endured the consequences of the faith and have not turned away; who have seen the advantages and benefits of abandoning the faith and have not been lured away by them; who have seen the disbelievers and the wrongdoers prosper in the world and have not cast even a stray glance at their wealth and splendor.”

(98) “In their Lord put their trust: who did not put their trust in their possessions and their business and their clans and tribes but in their Lord; who were prepared to fight every power and endure every danger for the sake of their faith only on the basis of their trust in their Lord irrespective of the worldly means, and left their homes if their faith so demanded; who trusted their Lord that He would not let go waste the rewards of their faith and good works, and were sure that He would succor His believers and righteous servants even in this world and bless them with the best rewards in the Hereafter as well.”

وَكَاَيِّنۡ مِّنۡ دَآبَّةٍ لَّا تَحۡمِلُ رِزۡقَهَا ۖ اَللّٰهُ يَرۡزُقُهَا وَاِيَّاكُمۡ ۖ وَهُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡعَلِيۡمُ ﴿۶۰﴾

(29-60) How many an animal there is that does not carry about its sustenance. Allah provides sustenance to them and to you. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (99)

(99) That is, “While migrating you should not be worried about your means of livelihood as you should not worry about your life’s safety. For none of the birds and the animals of the land and the sea that you find around yourself carries its provision with it. Allah is providing for all of them; wherever they go they get their provision through Allah’s bounty. Therefore, do not be disheartened by the thought that if you left your homes for the sake of your faith, you would have nothing to eat. Allah will provide for you as well from the sources from which He is providing for the countless of His other creatures.”

Precisely the same thing was taught by the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) to his disciples when he had said:

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than treat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take

therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew. 6: 2434).

The background of these discourses of the Quran and the Gospel is the same. There always comes a stage in the way of the propagation of the truth when the follower of the truth is left with no alternative but to stake his very life only with trust in Allah, regardless of the support and means of the material world. In these conditions, those who are too calculating about the possibilities of the future and seeking guarantees of the safety of life and assurance of provisions cannot do anything. Indeed, such conditions are changed only by the efforts and power of those who rise fearlessly in face of every danger and are even prepared to risk their very lives. It is all due to their sacrifices that ultimately the Word of Allah is raised high and all other words and creeds stand humbled and subdued before it.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ فَاَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾

(29-61) If you were to ask them: (100) “Who created the heavens and the earth and Who has kept the sun and the moon in subjection?” they will certainly say: “Allah.” How come, then, they are being deluded from the Truth?

(100) From here the discourse is again directed to the disbelievers of Makkah.

اَللّٰهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦٢﴾

(29-62) Allah enlarges the sustenance of any of His servants whom He will, and straitens the sustenance of whom He will. Surely Allah has knowledge of everything.

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ نَّزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ ؕ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾

(29-63) If you were to ask them: “Who sent down water from the sky and therewith revived the earth after its death?” they will certainly say: “Allah.” Say: “To Allah alone be praise and thanks.” (101) But most people do not understand.

(101) Here the word al-hamdu-lillah (Praise be to Allah) gives two meanings: (1) “When all this is done by Allah, then He alone is worthy of all praise, and none else”, and (2) “Thank God that you yourselves also admit this.”

وَ مَا هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَّ لَعِبٌ ؕ وَ اِنَّ الدَّارَ الْاٰخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ ۘ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۶۴﴾

(29-64) The present life is nothing but sport and amusement. (102) The true life is in the Abode of the Hereafter; if only they knew. (103)

(102) That is “The reality of it is no more than the children’s engaging in a sport and pastime for a while, and then returning home. The one has become a king here, has not become a king in reality but is only playing the king. A time comes when his play ends, and he leaves the royal throne as empty-handed as he was when he had entered the world. Similarly, no phase of life here is enduring and lasting. Every one is playing his part only temporarily for a limited time. Those who are charmed by the short-lived triumphs of this life and are able to collect some means of enjoyment and pleasure and of glory and grandeur by losing their conscience and faith, are only engaged in a pastime. What will these toys profit them when after amusing themselves with these for some years in the world, they will enter through the gate of death empty handed into the next world of eternal life and find their same allurements to have caused them an everlasting affliction?”

(103) That is, “If these people had known the reality that the life of this world is only a period of preparation for the test, and the real life for man, which is everlasting, is the life Hereafter, they would not have wasted this preparatory period in sport and

merry making, but would instead have utilized each moment of it in works conducive to better results in the eternal life of the Hereafter.”

فَاِذَا رَكِبُوۡا فِى الۡفُلۡكِ دَعَوُا اللّٰهَ مُخۡلِصِيۡنَ لَهُ الدِّيۡنَ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰٮهُمۡ اِلَى الۡبَرِّ اِذَا هُمۡ يُشۡرِكُوۡنَ ۝۶۵

(29-65) When they embark in the ships they call upon Allah, consecrating their faith to Him. But when He rescues them and brings them to land, they suddenly begin to associate others with Allah in His Divinity

لِيَكۡفُرُوۡا بِمَاۤ اٰتَيۡنٰهُمۡ وَلِيَتَمَتَّعُوۡا فَسَوۡفَ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۝۶۶

(29-66) that they may be ungrateful for the rescue that We granted them, and that they may revel in the pleasures (of the present life). (104) Soon they shall come to know.

(104) For explanation, see (E.Ns 29 and 41 of Surah Al-Anam); (E.Ns 29 and 31 of Surah Yunus) and (E.N. 84 of Surah Bani Israil).

اَوَلَمۡ يَرَوۡا اَنَّا جَعَلۡنَا حَرَمًا اٰمِنًا وَّيُتَخَطَّفُ النَّاسُ مِنۡ حَوۡلِهِمۡ ؕ اَفَبِالۡبَاطِلِ يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ وَبِنِعۡمَةِ اللّٰهِ يَكۡفُرُوۡنَ ۝۶۷

(29-67) Do they not see that We have given them a sanctuary of safety whereas people around them are being snatched away? (105) So, do they believe in falsehood and ungratefully deny Allah's bounties?

(105) That is, if the city of Makkah, in whose surroundings they enjoy perfect safety and security, had been made a sacred place by some Lat or Hubal, was it possible for a god or goddess to have secured this place against all sorts of mischief and violence for 2,500 years or so, in a striferidden land like Arabia? Who could then keep and maintain its sacredness and sanctity except Us?

وَمَنۡ اَظۡلَمُ مِمَّنِ افۡتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوۡ كَذَّبَ بِالۡحَـقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهٗ ؕ اَلَيۡسَ فِىۡ جَهَنَّمَ مَثۡوًى لِّلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ ۝۶۸

(29-68) Who can be more unjust than he who foists a lie on Allah or gives the lie to the Truth after it has come to him? (106) Is Hell not the resort of the unbelievers?

(106) That is, “The Prophet (peace be upon him) has made a claim to prophethood, and you have denied him. Now there can be only two alternatives: If the Prophet (peace be upon him) has made a false claim in the name of Allah, there can be no one more wicked than him, and if you have belied a true Prophet (peace be upon him), there can be no one more wicked than you.”

وَ الَّذِيۡنَ جَاهَدُوۡا فِيۡنَا لَنَهۡدِيَنَّهُمۡ سُبُلَنَا ؕ وَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمَعَ الۡمُحۡسِنِيۡنَ ﴿۶۹﴾

(29-69) As for those who strive in Our cause, We shall surely guide them to Our Ways. (107) Indeed Allah is with those who do good.

(107) The word mujahadah has already been explained in (E.N: 8) above. There it was said that a person who exerts will exert for his own good (Ayat 6). Here it is being reassured that Allah does not leave alone those who strive in His cause sincerely, even at the risk of a conflict with the entire world, but He helps and guides them and opens for them ways towards Himself. He teaches them at every step the way of winning His approval and goodwill and He shows them the light at every turning point to discriminate between the right way and the wrong ways of life. In short, Allah helps and succors and guides them according to their sincerity and intensity of desire for goodness.